



Vehicle fatalities on rise

by Janice Burton

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Motor-vehicle fatalities are on the rise on Fort Bragg, with six Soldiers killed since October 1, 2003.

“Since Sept. 11, the world has become a much more dangerous place,” said Chris Roose, accident investigator, Fort Bragg Safety Office. “Soldiers need to recognize that it’s not only in combat, but also in the rest of the world. Soldiers are coming back from deployment(s), and they are feeling pretty good about life. They need to slow down a little bit and make sure their actions don’t make them fall into habits that lead to what we call a ‘recipe for disaster.’”

That recipe for disaster involves four key ingredients - excessive speed, use of alcohol, lack of safety awareness and fatigue. According to Roose, the latest fatality involved the safety awareness component.

On Feb. 29, Sgt. Robert Deal, 24, a Soldier from the 503rd Maintenance Company, was killed when his Suzuki GSXR 600 ran head-on into a pick up truck on Vass Road on the Fort Bragg Reservation.

Deal had just acquired his North Carolina Motorcycle Learner’s Permit and had purchased his bike two weeks prior to the accident. His inexperience was a key factor in his death, according to Staff Sgt. Rex Williams, traffic section noncommissioned officer in charge, Provost Marshal’s Office.

“He was traveling with a group of other cyclists and was attempting to negotiate a curve on Vass Road, which due to his inexperience he was unable to negotiate and entered into the oncoming line of travel and collided with the pick up,” said Williams. “He wasn’t able to control his bike the way a properly licensed, experienced rider would have.”

Deal was carried a distance on the hood of the truck, while his motorcycle slid underneath the vehicle. He was pronounced dead at Cape Fear Valley Medical Center.

In North Carolina, a person can obtain a motorcycle learner’s permit after passing a written test. They can keep the permit for up to 18 months before taking a driving test. In order to ride a motorcycle on Fort Bragg, a person must be licensed and must complete the Motorcycle Defensive Driving Course before they can register their bike on post.

Roose and Williams agreed that many cyclists with the learner's permit are over-confident about their skills and that over-confidence leads to accidents.

"In this particular case the driver was obviously inexperienced and his over-confidence of his skills led to his death," said Roose.

Williams noted that other many other Soldiers are drinking and driving. He noted that alcohol has been a key ingredient in many of the recent deaths. Speed has been another key ingredient.

As an example, he said that a Soldier was stopped last weekend driving in excess of 105 mph on All American Expressway.

"Sgt. Deal was an honorable Soldier who served his country well in a time of war," said Roose. "We don't want to lose any other Soldiers that way."